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ABSTRACT

Presidential search committees, governing boards, aspiring or current presidents, and other groups or individuals are provided with guidelines for appointing a university president. The elements necessary for appointment are described as well as the conditions resulting from appointment. The search process should include such steps as an assessment of the needs of the institution prior to the start of the search, a determination (by the governing board) of the representative nature of the search committee, appointment of the search committee, generation of a timetable for completion, a statement of criteria for selection, determination of a communication plan, identification of qualified candidates, screening of the candidate pool, selection and interviewing of finalists, and offering the position to the top candidate. Clearly stated conditions of employment are important, and they include the nature, scope of authority, and responsibility vested in the president; conditions of appointment (academic rank, tenure, length of appointment, and assessment); compensation; insurance; housing; travel; leaves; miscellaneous considerations (social responsibilities, research and writing assistance, moving expenses); and leaving the presidency. Formal assessment of the president's performance in office is also important, and the governing board must establish a policy. Essential elements of this evaluation are a statement of expectations, the president's own self-assessment, a statement by the governing board of assessment procedures, and a meeting with the president and governing board to discuss the assessment while in progress. (SM)

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Guidelines on the Appointment of a President

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This document is intended to assist current or aspiring presidents, governing boards, presidential search committees, and other interested individuals or groups by providing a brief overview of certain elements of the appointment process and the resulting conditions of the appointment. Readers are encouraged to seek further information from the literature and from their respective national organizations.

It has been said that the most important responsibility of a governing board is the appointment of the president. Likewise, the acceptance of any presidency is a life-changing decision. Therefore, it is understandable that there is growing interest throughout the United States in the conditions of employment for college and university presidents—how they are appointed, evaluated, encouraged, and provided with alternate means of exiting from the presidential office.

The campus chief executive has administrative responsibility for the institution under the authority of the governing board, and bears enormous responsibility for institutional leadership. Our changing society presents college and university leaders with constantly evolving, never-ending challenges and demands. The pressure of leadership inevitably takes its toll, even in the best of times. Therefore, in order to ensure effective performance, a president must have a measure of professional and financial security. Further, changing state and federal tax laws and competition from the private sector of employment make it important that governing boards regularly and periodically review the conditions of appointment of their chief executive officers.

A strong and effective relationship between a president and the governing board is most likely to occur when the governing board has prepared the campus, the successful candidate, and itself for the presidency through a carefully conceived and well-executed presidential search process.

The Presidential Search Process

The search process followed by the governing board establishes the climate in which the president begins to exercise leadership. Indeed, even the quality of the governing board's choice of a president can be enhanced by a well-conceived and executed selection process. Because the process can be so critical to an institution's future, the design of the search process—which should be completed prior to the beginning of the search—is an urgent imperative.

The literature abounds in recommendations on steps to be followed in conducting a successful presidential search. Nearly every national presidentially or institutionally based organization can recommend documents for review, and many presidential and executive search firms are available to help with the process. Although each institution must tailor the process to its particular needs, most experts agree that the search process should include at least the following elements:

- Prior to the initiation of the search process, there should be a careful assessment of the needs of the institution and the type or style of leadership needed.
- The governing board should make a determination about the representative nature of the search committee to be appointed.
- The search committee should be appointed, the responsibilities of the committee stated, and adequate resources allocated.
- The steps to be followed in the search process and timetable for completion should be stated.
- The criteria to be used in the selection of candidates should be stated, and the range of the conditions of employment identified.
- A communication plan to be followed with the candidates, the media, and others should be determined in advance to provide needed information in a timely and courteous manner, and to respect the confidentiality of the candidates as appropriate.
- A pool of qualified candidates including men and women, majority and minority, should be identified. The search committee should not hesitate to be aggressive in identifying potential candidates, even though they may not have applied or been nominated.
- The results of the study of institutional needs and the type of leadership needed should be given to each candidate.
- The candidate pool should be screened to select those most able to meet the needs of the institution, and additional information should be collected on the select few to further narrow the list.

- The finalists should be chosen and additional information collected as needed.
- Finalists should be interviewed and additional background reviews conducted as needed. Candidates should be evaluated according to established criteria.
- The position should be offered to the top candidates and terms of employment negotiated. Unsuccessful candidates should be notified prior to the public announcement, and then the successful candidate should be announced.

The governing board has the responsibility of discussing with the successful candidate the results of the study of institutional needs and the type of leadership needed during or at the end of the search process. This information serves as an excellent basis for establishing expectations and for negotiating the conditions of employment.

Conditions of Employment

It should be remembered by all that the president serves at the pleasure of the governing board, *in the role of president*. Although there may be academic tenure, specified contract terms, or other agreements on length of obligation of the institution to the president, the president's service is always subject to immediate review by the governing board.

Because the governing board has the ultimate responsibility for the welfare of the institution, it must always be in a position to determine the occupant of the leadership position. This criterion protects the institution and the president. It is also a salient reason why the professional and financial security of the president must be addressed to the mutual satisfaction of both parties. Such an agreement will specify the obligations of the governing board to the president and the obligations of the president to governing board and the institution. Just as the governing board must live up to the agreement, so must the president.

A carefully planned and well-executed presidential search process will result in a statement of responsibility wherein the expectations of leadership are delineated, the evaluation process clarified, and the authority of the president made known. However, experience would indicate that these conditions may not be specified to the degree that would be most beneficial to the institution and the president.

The interests of all parties are best served when there is a clearly stated agreement on the conditions of employment. Simple letters of understanding, although common, leave much unstated and, thus, unclear to the governing board and the president alike. This is particularly true for the methods of exiting the presidency. At the time of presidential appointment, governing boards and presidents may not want to talk about the conditions of leaving the presidency, but such a time is probably the best one for reaching a mutualy agreeable understanding.

Discussions between the president and the governing board should include at least the items listed below. The list is not meant to be exhaustive. Governing boards and presidents are encouraged to contact their national organizations for the most recent information on potential elements of the contract, because institutions may differ according to size and type. The governing board and the president also need to make sure they are aware of how federal and state tax laws affect the various conditions of employment. When agreements are reached, they should be put in writing. This is not only good employment practice, but it also protects the governing board should inquiry be made, and protects the president should the membership of the governing board change over time.

Items for the discussion include:

- Nature, scope of authority, and responsibility vested in the president by the governing board
- Conditions of appointment
  Length of appointment
  Time frame for renewal consideration, if appropriate
  Academic rank
  Academic tenure, or how obtained
  If there is an assessment of the president, the process and procedure to be followed, including any due process procedures.
- Compensation
  Base salary
  Deferred compensation: (1) Purchase of annuity to limit of tax laws; (2) Amount held to be distributed at a future time, such as the end of tenure as president

Retirement plans: (1) Who pays? (2) How much is contributed? (3) Voluntary deduction for additional plans (4) Is the plan tied to Social Security? (5) Other sources of compensation—Foundation support, Consulting, Service on corporate and other boards

- Insurance

  Health: (1) Spouse, (2) Dependents (to what age), (3) Major medical (to what limits), (4) Yearly medical examination

  Life

  Disability

  Professional liability: Bridge policy between personal and that purchased or provided by the institution

  Travel insurance (accidental death or disability)

  Automobile (institution owned) insurance: Does institutional insurance cover rental cars?

- Housing

  If housing is provided: (1) Which bills are paid by the institution? (2) Requirements regarding family vs. official use, (3) Redecorate (how many dollars, who decides what), (4) Building additions (how many dollars, who decides what), (5) Lawn and grounds care, (6) Maid and/or housekeeping service, (7) Acquisition of personal residential real estate, (8) Replacement or repair of personally owned furniture

  If housing is not provided: (1) Housing allowance, (2) Lawn and grounds care, (3) Maid and/or housekeeping service, (4) Replacement or repair of personally owned furniture

- Travel

  Is car provided? (1) What size? (2) What expenses? (3) What about personal use?

  If car not provided: Mileage reimbursement rate (mechanism for adjustment)

  Travel-related expenses to be covered

  Payment for spouse travel

  Attendance at meetings (what kind, how many, where)

  International travel

- Leaves

  Vacation: (1) Accrue at what rate, (2) Accumulated to what limit, (3) Payment for non-use or upon separation

Sick: (1) Accrue at what rate, (2) Accumulated to what limit, (3) Payment for non-use or upon separation

Professional development: (1) Length, (2) Salary, (3) Status upon return

- Other considerations

Social responsibilities: (1) How paid, and what limits, (2) Payment for off-campus and on-campus obligations, (3) Who performs social coordinator responsibilities, and how remunerated

Expectations by, for, and about spouse: (1) Community expectations, (2) Campus expectations, (3) Extent of involvement with institution, (4) Outside employment, (5) Campus employment, (6) Secretarial and other support when conducting institutional business

Entertainment expense on and off campus

Club dues

Professional memberships

Service on boards

Acceptance of leadership positions (local, state, national)

Research and writing assistance

Tickets to institutional and noninstitutional events

Moving expenses

Financial counseling

Family use of facilities and services: (1) Tuition, (2) Babysitting

Day care for minor children

- Leaving the presidency

Length of notice required by the president and/or the governing board

Due process requirements

Position of responsibility if the president stays with the institution: (1) How salary determined, (2) Office, secretary, expense allowance, other perks

Outplacement service

Relocation expense

Separation allowance

Retraining opportunities (leave with pay, how long)

Presidential Assessment

The formal assessment of a president's performance in office is the subject of much controversy. Some say that no formal assessment of performance should occur. Others state that because the performance of the president *will* be assessed, even if informally, and if there is to be any consequence or job-related decision as a result of the assessment, it is only fair that performance criteria and assessment procedures be specified.

Even the *purpose* of assessment is subject to controversy. Is the assessment to be for the purpose of an employment-related decision, or is it to be a structured and formal communication vehicle between the president and the governing board about the goals, objectives, and plans for the institution?

If there is to be an assessment of presidential performance, the purpose and the process should be accepted and understood by all parties. Regardless of the purpose, the assessment will differ considerably from the seach process. The presidential search is generally extensive, and the process of screening and interviewing is complex and long. The major expenditure of effort and responsibility at the time of initial appointment generally rests with the search committee, which recommends candidates to the governing board.

The assessment process generally is not usually as lengthy. The president is already known by constituents; therefore, the process is instigated, conducted, and concluded by the governing board only, although information from others may be sought. This is essential in order to ensure fairness and a reasonable degree of objectivity.

If a governing board decides to establish a formal procedure for the assessment of presidential performance for a job-related decision, the process should be periodic and systematic. It should include consideration of the broad span of leadership requirements for that particular institution. All the proprieties in a dignified and professional administrative procedure should be observed, continuously preserving confidentiality.

Literature on presidential assessment for purposes of a job-related decision usually lists at least the following as essential elements for any effective assessment process.

- A statement of the expectations of presidential leadership, based on delineated criteria that reflect the gov-

erning board's expectations for the presidential performance in the context of the institutional mission. At least for the initial assessment, these expectations are usually the same as those identified during the search process and as modified by mutual agreement.

- The president's written self-assessment of leadership strengths, weaknesses, successes, and failures, in a form acceptable to the president, and/or an objective list of accomplishments attributed to presidential leadership, submitted to the governing board.
- A clearly defined statement by the governing board of assessment procedures. The statement should include who is to be involved in the assessment process, who receives or has access to the assessment results, and what decisions are based on the assessment.
- A meeting between the president and the governing board should be held to discuss the assessment while in progress, or to respond to the results of the assessment upon completion—and before the general results of the assessment process are compiled.

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